

Juvenile-center inmates offer Katrina help *Youths donate \$482 to aid storm victims, pleasing Miss Virginia*

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Kristi Glakas and her glittering, four-point crown lit up the dim gymnasium and spirits of three dozen teenage males in dark-green institutional jumpsuits sitting in black plastic chairs.



Glakas, the reigning Miss Virginia, was a slender, glamorous and incongruous presence at the Oak Ridge Juvenile Correctional Center in Bon Air yesterday.

Oak Ridge is the smallest of Virginia's seven juvenile correctional centers. The oldest boy watching Glakas was 19, the youngest 14. Their records include robbery, theft and sex crimes.

On their own initiative, 13 of them raised \$482 -- at 35 cents to 45 cents an hour -- that was given to the American Red Cross to help the survivors of Hurricane Katrina.

"I love you guys, I love you," said Glakas, 24, who will compete for the title of Miss America in January. "That you guys saw this on TV news, that you saw this and had such empathy . . . is a really incredible thing."

There were cheers and applause. One youth shouted back, "I love you," sparking laughter.

Barry Green, director of the Department of Juvenile Justice, told them he knew they did not have much money in their inmate accounts. "Based upon what you had when you gave,

you gave a lot more than almost anybody in this state, maybe in the country."

Green told them that while "you all screwed up something to get here, a good heart is something money can't buy and when you give of yourself, that really says a lot about you."

Oak Ridge is for juvenile offenders who have learning impairments and/or low IQs.

"Most of our kids read, write and do math on or below third-grade level," said Susan Jones, an assistant superintendent.

The youths at Oak Ridge benefit from counseling, special education and other programs that might not be available elsewhere. They also are safer there than in another juvenile center where they might be more vulnerable than the rest of the inmates.

Jones said that several weeks ago one of the boys approached her in a hall and grabbed her arm.

"Miss Jones, Miss Jones, I know you'll help us," she said the boy told her. "I want to give some money to those people . . . the ones down in New Orleans, you know where the hurricane came through."

"Why do you want to do that," she said she asked him. "He said, his exact words were: 'Miss Jones, when I see those people it hurts my heart.'"

"Nobody mentioned it to them. It was their idea," she said.

Tim, 17, has been at Oak Ridge for two years.

He donated roughly \$40. The average inmate has about \$100 accumulated by the time they leave, administrators said.

"We watched it every day," he said of the horror in New Orleans and the Gulf Coast that unfolded on television screens. "I felt sad because those people ain't got nothing. They lost all

their family. They didn't know where they could eat, take a bath."

He said he was happy about getting a chance to meet Miss Virginia. When he found out she was coming, he said, "I was shocked . . . ain't never met nobody like that who was famous."

There was some swagger as each youth stood and walked toward Glakas to get their award. But they all wore grins.

"It's just a piece of paper," Glakas said. But she advised them to keep the award for the rest of their lives.

Some day when they are in a difficult spot, she told them, "all you have to do is look at your piece of paper and see that you cared so much about yourself, that you cared for other people."

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